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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAR ES SALAAM 000217

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E AND INR/AA

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SUBJECT: Up-Country Travels: Local Government Mechanisms

Classified by Pol-Econ Chief Judy Buelow for reason  
1.5(b)

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1. (U) Summary: From January 7-23, Embassy Dar es Salaam was fortunate to have the use of a chartered Twin Otter airplane from Prescott Aviation. Mission personnel had an unparalleled opportunity to view a cross section of the diverse regions of the vast Tanzanian mainland. During their travels, Embassy delegations inaugurated Self Help and DOD Humanitarian Assistance projects and met with regional and district government officials in Mwanza, Shinyanga, Mtwara, Mbeya and Ruvuma. A separate, complementary report will explore the unique economic and social situation of each of these regions. This report will outline several common themes that emerged when the travelers compared notes. Much of our reporting typically focuses on the national government, on politicking in the rarified zones of Dar es Salaam and Dodoma, and on the unique case of semi-autonomous Zanzibar. This report describes the conditions and major concerns in areas of Tanzania's vast hinterland that are often overlooked. The majority of Tanzania's 35 million people live in the mainland's rural villages and provincial cities; their experience of local government and economic development is shaped by the conditions outlined below.

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The CCM Machine Rules  
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2. (U) A Tanzanian "region" is an administrative division that is only very roughly equivalent to an American state. The most crucial difference is that a region lacks an autonomous government. Only a few government officials administer each of the 26 regions, and the officials who count are all appointed by the central government. Presumably, all are members in good standing of the ruling CCM party. The Regional Commissioner is an appointed official, as are the District Commissioners who head up the next lowest division of local government. Regional and District Commissioners are assisted by a small staff of administrators and school superintendents. Jobs in local government tend to go to people who are rising in the ranks of the CCM party, but these positions rarely go to local people. In fact, these civil servants rarely have close ties to the regions or districts where they serve. In a policy that dates to Mwalimu Nyerere's efforts to build national unity, most officials in local governments were born someplace else, and have been transferred to local government positions all over the country. While this policy attenuates regional or tribal tendencies, it also ensures that government officials are more beholden to the CCM government that appointed them than to the grassroots of any given region.

3. (U) Only at the very lowest level of government, the urban "street" or rural "village," does an elected council have an advisory role. Even in these electoral offices, the CCM dominates: in the last local elections, conducted in November 2004, CCM candidates won 96 percent of the council seats.

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Local Leaders Bring Home the Bacon  
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4. (U) Regional and district officials seek to raise their visibility by attracting new investment or funding for development projects. While the central government provides some resources, especially for basic infrastructure, local governments must also look elsewhere for resources. Every local official has a project proposal in search of a donor. Everybody has a plan for launching a major new industry, or reviving a moribund parastatal, if only an investor can be found. Local government officials spend much of their time conducting welcoming ceremonies for visiting foreign dignitaries. Potential investors are also welcomed graciously. In the hinterland, which is dotted with shuttered parastatal enterprises, there is little nostalgia for the era of African socialism, and no expectation that the central government will again try to provide the wherewithal to run the region's industries.

Most local governments are eager to attract private sector investment to rejuvenate local agricultural processing industries that have been moribund for decades.

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National Leaders Remember Home  
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15. (C) In the scramble for donor funding, or for public and private investment, the region that is home to a top government leader has the edge. It is certainly no accident that President Mkapa's village in Masasi District is now accessible by a good dirt road. It is probably no accident that the entire Mtwara Region, in which Masasi is located, is now emerging from its longstanding isolation, thanks to the construction of the Mkapa Bridge. At the other end of the country, Shinyanga Region also seeks the infrastructure that will enable it to overcome its isolation and attract investors. Shinyanga region is home to Prime Minister Frederick Sumaye, one of the contenders for the CCM's Presidential nomination in the 2005 elections. Despite the policies implemented to quell regionalism, those local government officials whose fortunes are tied to Shinyanga Region presumably have a motive to support Sumaye's presidential aspirations. A future President Sumaye could provide Shinyanga with the resources, and the infrastructure projects to make ambitious regional officials shine.

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Popularity Still Counts  
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6.(U) Although most Regional and District officials look to the CCM party for their appointments, and to outside investors and donors to fund their major projects, they also cultivate their grassroots. Local government officials improve the CCM's standing, and their own, if they demonstrate they are responsive to the people. One District Commissioner reports he constantly rides circuit so that he can consult with the leaders of each village in his district. Local governments also must mobilize the grassroots to provide resources, in cash and in labor, for routine social services. If villagers need a primary school, they will typically make the bricks and build the walls themselves. Often, local people will repair the potholes in village roads.

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The National Government is Far Away  
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17. (C) The Ministries in Dar es Salaam make policies and the Parliament in Dodoma passes legislation, but this does not always affect the standard operating procedures of local governments. In one notable example, the Masasi District Commissioner reported that only half of his operating budget comes from the central government, and said that the district raises the rest through taxes on agricultural products, and a head tax paid by individuals. The DC did not comment on the fact that these taxes strongly resemble the "nuisance taxes" that Finance Minister Mramba supposedly abolished, with great fanfare, in 2003. In this case, the district's continuing need for revenue seems to have trumped central government policy. Regional and District governments must govern with very minimal personnel: police, border patrols, and public works are all little in evidence. Local governments' overwhelming need to deal with practical considerations may explain why so many Tanzanian laws and policies that are officially on the books are not effectively implemented on the ground.

18. (C) Comment: The average Tanzanian, living somewhere up-country on the mainland, will have a different experience of the 2005 elections than will his counterpart in Dar or in highly politicized and polarized Zanzibar. For many, voting will be a civic exercise and a manifestation of citizenship, but their ballot will give them little real power to change their government or join the debate over local development priorities. Most decisions about the allocation of resources and of political power will still result from the give and take among a relatively restricted circle of individuals who occupy the top echelons of both the CCM party and the national government. It would be extremely difficult for an opposition political party to establish a presence in the Tanzanian interior; it's surprising that in a very few districts, some opposition parties have done so. End Comment.